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ABSTRACT

One of the prevalent misconceptions that severely limits the possibilities of curriculum change in schools is the belief that theory has no direct relevance to pedagogical problems and that what is really needed are practical ideas for classroom instruction. Serious curriculum change requires an explicit dependence upon improved applications of relevant theories. If teachers cannot learn to apply new theories deliberately, no change at all is likely to happen in the classroom. For example, rather than teach vocabulary directly, the crucial pedagogical implication of current theory is that words are learned indirectly in the context of a rich environment of active language use when they are needed for some other purpose; the challenge is to find teaching activities that indirectly promote vocabulary development. Or, to teach literature using current theory, the teacher should help students enrich and extend their capacities to make meaning out of texts, recognizing the personal validity of the meaning that each student has derived from the text. Theories of language have emphasized that structure is used to express meaning, that meaning-making is the driving force for mastering structures, and that the most significant occasions for language development are those where language is a means rather than the end of learning. These theories suggest very limited possibilities for the direct as opposed to the indirect method of teaching language skills. (HOD)

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ANOTHER JOURNEY THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS: NEW LENSES FOR OLD PROBLEMS

(Or, sometimes the long way around is the only way to get there.)

When Alice first went though the looking-glass she found—as she had earlier seen in Wonderland—a world where her previously established constructs didn't work very well to account for even the most routine events of life. When she first meets the Red Queen, for example, she suddenly finds herself running as fast as she could but:

> The most curious part of the thing is, that the trees and the other things around them never changed their places at all: however fast they went, they never seemed to pass anything. [And, when the Queen finally lets her rest, she observes that:] "In our country, you'd generally get to someplace else—if you ran very fast for a long time as we've been doing."
>
> "A very slow sort of country!" said the Queen. "Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that."

While it is true that most of us in English teaching often feel that every time we open the school door we are in a looking-glass world where

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we are running fast to stay in place--particularly when we regard the stacks of student papers which seem to magically replenish themselves no matter how many we read--my reason for mentioning Alice's confusion is not to bemoan our fate. It is, instead, to point out that all of us view the world on the basis of our experience of it, that we use these experience-based constructs to make predictions about the future course of events, and, further, that these constructs always influence and frequently distort our ability to perceive the nature of the reality which surrounds us. We can't help but do so, of course, any more than Alice couldn't help expecting to be under a different tree after running so fast and so long, but it is important both to be aware that we do so and to be prepared to change our constructs when new experience doesn't conform to our predictions.

Theories and Teaching:

Although I used the term constructs—derived from the work of George Kelly—to describe these structures of knowledge, belief, and perception, I could just as easily have used theories or hypotheses, because my major purpose today is to try to explode one of the prevalent misconceptions that severely limits the possibilities of curriculum change in schools: the belief of many teachers that theory has no direct relevance to their pedagogical problems and that what is really needed are practical answers to the question: What can I do on Monday? I am going to try to convince you—although I recognize that just by being here you are probably less in need of convincing on this point than most of your colleagues—that What can I do Monday? is always, in fact, answered on the basis of theory and indeed must be so answered.

This may seem paradoxical, but as the White Queen explained when Alice complained that:

> "One can't believe impossible things."
>
> "I daresay you haven't had much practice," said the Queen. "When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

Surely it should be easy enough for all of us to believe at least one impossible thing after lunch.

The impossibility disappears like the Cheshire Cat—maybe or maybe not leaving a smile behind—when we see that all teaching decisions are based on the teacher's view of the world. How we view our subject determines what we see as problems and what we will accept as solutions to those problems. While many teachers may not recognize that these perceptions are theory based, and that, indeed, is part of the difficulty we face, they are no less so for being unrecognized. Unless one has a theory of spelling, then there are no spelling problems, without a theory of grammar, no participles can dangle, in the absence of a theory of literature, there are no plots or themes. And since every teaching activity is designed to solve a problem, it becomes crucially important to understand that every time we perceive a problem we do so on the basis of a theory or set of theories.

I will try to exemplify how this works shortly, but first I must admit that many of the theories that have been urged on teachers as panaceas for their difficulties certainly aren't—or at least aren't directly so, transformational-generative grammar being the most obvious case that I am familiar with. And, second, that even the most relevant theoretical

insights need to be transformed through serious intellectual endeavor in the process of applying them to teaching activities. It may be that teachers are reluctant or in some cases even unable to make the appropriate translations. It may be that they have not been sufficiently helped by teacher educators and curriculum leaders to do so. But I am convinced that serious curriculum change requires an explicit dependence upon improved applications of relevant theories, and that those of us who are trying to promote such change must find ways of helping teachers learn to value, understand, and use theories. This is essential because to avoid doing so is to doom us to running fast and never getting anyplace, and because if teachers can't learn to apply new theories deliberately, no change at all is likely to happen in the classroom.

Type 1 vs. Type 2 Theories

Part of the reason this process is difficult, is that most of us operate most of the time—even in our professional lives—on the basis of what I will call Type 1 theories. These are the theories which we have largely built on the basis of our personal experience and the violations of which were so troubling to Alice. Our memories, like Alice's, don't permit us to "remember things before they happen," and since we tend to agree with the White Queen that "It's a poor sort of memory that only works backwards," we compensate by assuming on the basis of our Type 1 theories that the future will be much like the past. While this is both normal and essential, theories of this sort usually have the weakness of being largely unconscious, unreflected upon, and relatively impermeable in the sense that they tend to make us try to have reality fit our theory rather than adjusting the theory to be better in harmony with a changed reality.

Type 1 theories in education are particularly difficult to penetrate because they tend to have been built on the experiences of teachers when they were students of the age they are teaching rather than on any later learning. When Alice discusses education with the Mock Turtle, he allows that he only took:

". . . the regular course."

"What was that?" inquired Alice.

"Reeling and Writhing, of course, to begin with," the Mock Turtle replied, "and then the different branches of Arithmetic, Ambition, Distraction, Uglification, and Derision."

For many teachers the kinds of Reeling and Writhing we teach and the way we teach them are more affected by our experiences as students than by any teacher preparation courses, district curricula, or in-service extravaganzas. This is true in part because we were usually relatively good Reelers and Writhers or we wouldn't be teaching it, but mostly it is true because our own student experience defined the way education is 'spozed to be. Perhaps because we have never been through the looking-glass, nothing that has happened to us since has had much effect on our most basic assumptions about what kids are supposed to learn and how they are to learn it.

The problem with Type 1 theories in education is that they lead us too often to identify the wrong problems, to ask the wrong questions, and to come up with inadequate answers. This is principally true because they assume that the basic principles underlying our work are all givens and the only important questions remaining are of the <u>What</u> do I do Monday? (and <u>How</u> do I do it?) sort. This would be tolerable, I guess, if everyone were convinced that we are doing a terrific job, but . . .

Type 2 theories, on the other hand, while connected to personal experience, are more based on collective, public, and shared experiences than idiosyncratic ones. They are more likely to be both conscious and to have been consciously learned. They are more reflected upon, more explicitly worked out, and, perhaps most important, more open to change and modification on the basis of our own experience and that of others. Although Type 2 theories may be as strongly held and as fervently argued for as Type 1 theories, at least in principle they contain a commitment to both empirical verification and to revision or even abandonment on the basis of counter-examples.

We don't have very many fully worked out Type 2 theories which explain all the kinds of issues and phenomena we are concerned with as English educators, but that makes the need to shift from Type 1 to Type 2 theories as the source of our curricular decisions stronger rather than weaker. This is primarily true because it is only by attempting to develop and implement new theory based curricula with a Type 2 spirit of experimentation and revision that we can begin to close the gap between what we wish to achieve—our goals—and what we are actually accomplishing—our results.

One of the reasons we don't have very many adequate Type 2 theories in language education is that the complexities of the human mind and its language system as well as all of the multitude of influences that affect language development are just so difficult to explain. But, ironically, one of the advantages of Type 2 theories is that they explicitly recognize both what they can and cannot explain, and they have specific mechanisms for attempting to gradually fill in the gaps in their explanations. They offer only hypotheses not certainties, but it is only through formulating and

testing hypotheses and re-formulating new ones that we are likely to ever understand more than we do now about why our pedagogical practices are likely (or unlikely) to lead to our desired goals.

To adopt a Type 2 approach to education requires a tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty, however, which many teachers (and, indeed, most people) find highly uncomfortable. We do, to be sure, have to make teaching decisions, plan lessons, evaluate papers, and so forth on the basis of the best approximation we have of the way things work, but unless we recognize that we are employing tentative conclusions rather than eternal verities the prospects for change and improvement are dim indeed.

When Alice first discovered "Jabberwocky" her first problem was merely to decode it—a problem she solved by holding it up to a mirror which was a logical step in a looking-glass world. Once she had done so, however, she was still in a quandry for what was she to make of:

> 'Twas brillig and the slithy toves
> Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
> All mimsy were the borogoves,
> And the mome raths outgrabe.
>
> "It seems rather pretty," she said when she had finished it, "but it's rather hard to understand!" (You see she didn't like to confess, even to herself, that she couldn't make it out at all.)

She is still puzzled by it when she runs across one of the world's great literary critics (and English teachers), Humpty Dumpty. Professor Dumpty has little tolerance for ambiguity and full confidence in his own Type 2 certainty and is prepared to definitively pronounce on any text. (He had earlier pointed out to Alice that: "When I use a word, . . . it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less. . . . The question is which

is to be master—that's all.") When Alice, playing the dutiful if somewhat skeptical student, asks him to "tell me the meaning of the poem called 'Jabberwocky'," he is fully prepared to reply.

> "Brillig means four o'clock in the afternoon—the time when you begin broiling things for dinner."
>
> "That'll do very well," said Alice: "and 'slithy'?"
>
> "Well, 'slithy' means 'lithe and slimy.' 'Lithe' is the same as 'active.' You see it's a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed up into one word.

As a good English student, Alice rapidly gets into the game, providing her own definition for wabe, but the danger here is not that Professor Dumpty is not clever or witty—because he surely is both, but that he seems so sure of himself and so arbitrary. (He is equally sure that he will be all right if he falls off the wall, and even Alice knows how wrong he is on that account.) It is precisely this impression of certainty which lets students allow teachers to interpret literature for them (if they don't get it from Cliff's notes), and this impression of arbitrariness which develops the view that only English teachers have the key to the poetic code and that mere students needn't even bother.

This attitude of certainty is bad enough in teaching students—particularly about literature which is notoriously "slithy" stuff—but even worse when it comes to thinking about the whys of English teaching: I'd like to spend the rest of my time with you this afternoon, therefore, briefly sketching four problems confronting English teachers and contrasting Type 1 and Type 2 analyses of them and solutions for them. The requirements of brevity will make some of the positions more caricatured than I'd like, but I'll invoke the noble tradition of Lewis Carroll to ask your forgiveness for that.

Vocabulary Development

The first problem I want to address is the frequently voiced complaint that students have inadequate vocabularies. This has correlates in complaints about low scores on ACT or SAT verbal aptitude tests, poor reading ability, and limited diction in writing.

One traditional way of trying to solve this problem is to teach vocabulary directly. Methods to do so usually involve giving students lists of words which are then tested weekly in a variety of ways: picking out synonyms, using the word in a sentence, writing a definition and so on. Some lip-service is paid to reading as a source of vocabulary enrichment, but, ironically, the controlled vocabulary used by publishers to ensure "readability" has meant that most school books retard rather than stretch student vocabularies. In this approach to teaching, little attention is usually paid to the role of talk and of writing as means of vocabulary growth.

This approach is usually based on a variety of Type 1 theories. The most fundamental is a kind of unexamined behaviorism which holds that kids learn words through direct instruction and practice which build the appropriate stimulus-response associations. A related theoretical assumption involves the idea that a diagnosed problem needs a direct instructional remedy. Although most people who have tried such approaches recognize their limited utility (such teaching/testing is one of the best examples I know of the kind of "learning" which is mastered for the quiz and forgotten by the time school is over for the day), they are often continued because they help convince everyone involved: teachers, students, administrators, and parents, that the school is "doing something" about the problem. They also provide a neat and precise record of grades which allegedly show whether or not the learning has occurred.

A Type 2 theory approach to the problem, on the other hand, would be based both on our recognition of the failure of current approaches and on our emerging knowledge of the mental lexicon we build as we acquire a language. Recent psycholinguistic research has shown how fast and how naturally we learn words when we have a context for using them productively. The full possession of a word means controlling its grammar, phonology, and morphology as well as its meaning and a variety of subtle restrictions on its appropriate use. The development of such a full command is reached through a gradual process of refinement of successively close approximation of meaning and is arrived at only through an active process of language use in which the word is needed to fit the situation rather than through creating a situation (or a sentence) to fit the word. This process begins at the earliest stages of language acquisition as when children learn to stop overgeneralizing daddy which often first seems to mean adult male (a potential source of some embarrassment for mom and dad alike) and continues through the process of gradually refining the meanings of technical terms like atom or cell.

The crucial pedagogical implication of current Type 2 theories of the lexicon is that words are learned indirectly in the context of a rich environment of active language use when they are needed for some other purpose, and the challenge to us as teachers is to find teaching activities that indirectly promote vocabulary development. These include reading and listening, of course, but most crucially they center on the production of language in talk and writing. Since the goal of vocabulary development is the enrichment of the student's repertoire of words which can be used appropriately, we must recognize that the words will never be really needed—and therefore will never become part of the student's permanent

lexicon--unless they are acquired in a context where the concepts they express are needed. If the ideas become important, and are talked about and written about, the words will be learned.

We must, of course, help students (and parents and administrators) see how this process works as well and we must develop better--if probably indirect—means of assessing vocabulary development so that all parties can see that it is happening. And we must look to our Type 2 theoretical frame to help us evaluate our efforts. The one role that does seem left for direct instruction in vocabulary is a new approach to traditional practice: that of teaching derivational morphology. To be consistent with psycholinguistic research, however, such an approach should not be directed to teaching new words as such, but to show students that the lexicon they already have has given them a flexible system for creating and understanding words which relate to those they already know and that when they learn a new word they are, in a sense, learning a whole family of related words as well. Helping students recognize the power of the language system they already possess and giving them confidence in their ability to use it productively is one of the few areas where direct language teaching can pay off.

Reading Literature

A second problem I'd like to address is the frequently expressed concern that students don't read very well, and specifically that they don't read literature well. The recent national assessment shows that students can read well for facts, but can't make inferences or interpretations well at all. Related to this, of course, is the fact that students don't read enough literature either in school or, even more important, on their own.

Part of the difficulty with this "problem" is that of the theoretical perspective through which it is defined. Although there are many sources for the current definition of this problem, the two most significant, although somewhat in conflict, are the kinds of reading tests that are used to assess student reading achievement and the ways literature is taught to teachers in many graduate English departments. The first, resulting in part from the failure of English teachers to understand and confront our colleagues in reading, has led to an overemphasis on teaching and testing for literal comprehension. This has some justification in the reading of non-fictional prose although even there inference skills and the ability to see the forest rather than just the trees is an important goal. In the testing of literature, however, concentration on "facts" like where Silas buried the money or who whitewashed Tom Sawyer's fence is too often overemphasized at the expense of helping students determine <u>why</u> Silas felt he had to bury it or <u>how</u> Tom got his friends to do the work.

This is often compounded with the student perception that only teachers have the keys to unlock the secret meanings of literature. This second source of the problem often results from teachers doing to students what their professors had done to them; that is, insisting on a single "correct" interpretation of literary works. The student is often confronted, therefore, with the recognition of an orthodox interpretation derived from the teacher. The effect of either—or, more usually, of both—is to implicitly tell students that they are incapable of determining the meaning of literary texts through individual effort and that they should concentrate on the "facts" and wait for the teacher to provide the interpretation. The two misleading or misapplied theories—of the centrality of literal meaning derived in part from the "decoding" emphasis of the reading teacher and of

the possibility of an orthodox reading of a text derived mostly from the now old "new" criticism—have therefore been partly responsible for the kinds of teaching practices that have created the "problem."

A different theoretical basis for the reading of literature may provide a better approach to teaching it. This theoretical stance, called the transactional theory of literature by Louise Rosenblatt, one of its pioneers, is built around the observation that each reader's "transaction" with a text is somewhat idiosyncratic. As we read literature—or, in fact, anything else—we are engaged in a process of meaning-making in which the words on the page are interpreted on the basis of our individual experiences which are in turn colored by our socio-cultural status, our personalities and beliefs, and our linguistic capacities. This process is clear to everyone in the theatre where it is obvious that directors and actors must have their own vision of the text and its meaning—Olivier's Hamlet is not Burton's or Gielgud's or Williamson's. But it's reality and validity are less often recognized or exploited in the classroom, although most teachers know that the Huck Finn that eighth graders read is not the same as that of 11th graders or as theirs.

The reality of reading literature is that the experience of a text is a private, personal transaction between reader and text. It is the private nature of the experience that has led Northrop Frye to argue that literature cannot be taught directly. What teachers can do, however, is to help students enrich and extend their capacities to make meaning from texts, but they must do so initially by sincerely recognizing the personal validity of the meaning that each student has made from the text. Sharing such reader responses, exploring their sources both in the text and the reader, and moving toward the achievement of the kind of loose consensus

which recognizes the inevitability of some diversity of interpretation but insists on making readings which are at least consistent with the text, provides an effective classroom process. It directly involves the student's meaning-making powers by requiring the articulation of his or her response in talk or in writing. And by legitimizing the student's central role in the process of interpretation, it can provide a basis for growing student confidence in their ability to read literature on their own which is a necessary prerequisite for doing so.

The teacher's role is crucial but essentially indirect in the sense that the teacher no longer serves as the ultimate judge of literary interpretation, but rather serves as questioner, prober, skeptic, and discussion leader whose goal is to help the students' deepen their own responses without imposing his or her own upon them. To achieve this kind of classroom requires considerable re-education and practice for students and teacher alike because all parties are likely to be quite comfortable with the traditional, more clear-cut assignment of interpretive power. Treating literary texts as the objects of Type 2 theoretical enquiry in which hypotheses are proposed and tested, ambiguities are welcomed and explored, and all readings are viewed as the tentative products of fallible readers is hard for many to accept. But until we accept it, literature will remain the exclusive preserve of its elite priests and acolytes who will continue to deny access to texts to all but their most devoted followers.

Correctness in Writing

Still a third problem confronting English teachers is the complaint that students don't write well, by which is meant that they spell poorly, punctuate badly, and have poor command of grammar and usage. (I'll get to

what I consider real writing problems next.) In the last several years this complaint has developed greater urgency as students (and, by implication, schools and teachers) have been tested on their knowledge of these matters. This is not the place to speculate on why American's are so obsessed with such things, particularly with spelling; one of the questions I am determined to answer some day is how spelling came to be associated with intelligence in this country, but I digress.

While the reality of such "problems" is indisputable for some students, the traditional solution of attempting to directly confront the problem by means of extensive drills and exercises in grammar just doesn't work to change the way kids write as research study after research study has demonstrated since the turn of the century. And, sadly for those teachers who have spent endless hours circling and annotating every error they can find on student papers, such extensive correcting of student work doesn't have much effect either.

The urge for a direct attack on such problems is understandable, and the tenacity of grammar teaching in the face of both experiential and research based counter-evidence seems to spring mostly from a confusion of correlation with causation, partly from the same kind of unconscious behaviorism which underlies much of American education, and, importantly, from the genuine conviction of parents and teachers (and students, too), that their own personal successes (or even more commonly their failures) as writers have depended upon their knowledge (or lack of knowledge) of grammar. The correlation/causation confusion is based usually on the fact that grammar came relatively easily to most teachers, and since they were often learning grammar as they were learning to write, they have assumed that it was a causative factor in their success.

Conversely those who have or have had problems with writing have often believed that where they went wrong was in not learning enough grammar.

Type 2 theories of the processes of composing and of language development bear directly on this problem and give promise of a more adequate definition of and solution to these problems. One of the most striking findings of recent composing process research was Perl's discovery that the basic (unskilled) writers she studied were excessively worried about correctness. On average by the time they reached the third word of the texts they were writing, they were stopping to wonder whether or not they were spelling words correctly, where the commas were supposed to be and the like. They were hampered throughout their writing by trying to remember rules and maxims which in most cases they had either learned incompletely or were trying to apply incorrectly. The net effect was that they produced tortured texts without adequate development, clarity, or organization and which were also, ironically, still filled with errors.

When we look at the nature of the human language system and at how it is developed and used, two other striking realities emerge. The first is that every speaker of a language has control over an incredibly complex and powerful linguistic system which enables them to speak and listen. The "grammar" that enables us to do this, however, is a system which we are completely unconscious of in the process of language use. Each of you, as listeners, and I, as a speaker, have no conscious knowledge at this moment of what rules are being followed as I produce and you understand this sentence, and to try to be conscious of them would make it impossible for the meaning exchange which is being attempted to take place. And that is just the point: control of a grammatical system is developed as a means to the ends of being able to express one's own ideas and comprehend the ideas

of others, and it happens naturally and unconsciously as (or if) we find ourselves in increasingly complex linguistic environments.

The first solution to the grammar problem, therefore, is to provide students with the richest language environment possible; one filled with multiple opportunities for purposeful talk and writing as well as reading and listening. As a correlate to this, it is crucially important to help student writers see that while proper use of the formal features of the written language is important, it is so because it facilitates communication and that their first priority (and ours) should be on shaping their meanings. There is little point for either writer or reader in an impeccable paper that says nothing.

The first solution—that of a rich language environment—is essential for developing the "ear" for the written language which is the primary basis making appropriate language choices and for catching errors after they have been made in an early draft. Composing process research shows that editing can be separated from the processes of drafting and revising which make up the primary meaning-making and shaping aspects of writing: Students can learn to develop and trust their own sense of language through reading their own work aloud, sharing it with their peers, and looking to the teacher as a supporter or coach of their attempts to improve a paper while it is still in process.

This last is an important point because it suggests one of the reasons why extensive teacher annotations of error have been largely ineffective: they have come long after the paper has been finished and when the problems the student may have recognized—however dimly—while composing the text have long since disappeared from consciousness. If editing annotations are to be useful they must be made during rather than

after the process of composing, and they will be most helpful of all if they can be framed in terms of assisting the writer's effort to communicate to a reader rather than seen, by the writer, as a set of arbitrary and irrelevant demands which only English teachers really care about.

The second solution to the "grammar problem," therefore, is to only seek to develop metalinguistic awareness in the context of helping the student writer more effectively express and communicate his or her ideas. This is unlikely to happen, of course, if students aren't writing purposeful (to them) papers to audiences who show more interest in what they are saying than how they are saying it. And, that, finally, is the ultimate source of solution to all sorts of writing problems.

Power in Writing

Indeed much of what I've just said relates equally to the solution of the other major type of complaints about student writing: that they don't write clearly, coherently, powerfully, persuasively and so on. While this, too, is often true enough, one important causative factor in this regard is that students simply don't write enough in school. The responsibility for this rests on the whole faculty of the school which is why I am spending most of this year working with many of you to help you to encourage the use of writing as a tool for learning throughout the curriculum. I won't spend any more time on that issue today except to point out that there is no way that students will learn to write in all the modes of writing they will need unless the whole faculty of a school makes them write frequently. It isn't easy to get that to happen, as I know very well, but try we must.

The particular aspect of the development of effective writers that I want to focus on as the last problem is the common view that writing skills

develop from small units to large ones. This approach, which I have sometimes called the bottom-up strategy, operates on the basis of a Type 1 theory which appears to maintain that one must be able to write a good sentence before one can write a good paragraph, a good paragraph before three paragraphs, three before five and so on. A frequent pedagogical corrollary to the bottom-up approach is the insistence that students can't write good paragraphs, for example, unless they know how to identify and explicitly write topic sentences, and know several paradigms for paragraph development such as the use of supporting details, and of comparison/contrast. The analytical theories of rhetoric upon which such pedagogies have been built are not what I am criticizing here, nor am I suggesting that they never have a place in writing instruction. My criticism is really of the psychological theories which have influenced their use in the process of writing instruction. These theories have implied that writers first have a form in mind before they have determined what they have to say, and, that much the same as is believed to be true of grammar, the best way to achieve rhetorical control is to have a set of rules or principles in mind while you are composing.

While I do believe that some aspects of rhetorical analysis can be helpful in the revision process—particularly with relatively skilled writers who are attempting to meet a variety of rhetorical demands—burdening unskilled and beginning writers with prescriptions about sentence types, where topic sentences belong, and how arguments are built puts the structural cart before the meaning-making horse and encourages student writers to believe, once again, that no one much cares what they say as long as their form is appropriate. Until school writing becomes meaningful enough to the writer that he or she cares about its rhetorical effectiveness,

there is little point in trying to have students master various rhetorical strategies.

My main criticism of the bottom-up approach, however, is based on those theories of language which shows that when language is used for communication, what we produce are whole ideas. These may be short or long, but they always have some sense of completeness even if they are not grammatically complete. Even in writing, people rarely try to write a single paragraph, as a paragraph, except in school. Limitations of space may sometimes require us to limit ourselves to a paragraph, but the point is that in real communication situations, it is the meaning being transmitted that determines the form and the extent of the piece rather than the reverse. It is usually the case that younger writers write shorter pieces than older ones, but even then this is more the result of limits on the complexity of their messages, rather than on their capacities to write longer pieces if what they have to say demands it.

The sentence errors produced by inexperienced writers are more often than not errors of omission (producing fragments) which can usually be corrected by having to read one's own work aloud, or of punctuation which can only be mastered through discovering the kinds of message confusion they cause. Punctuation exercises with others work, or limiting writers to producing single sentences first before allowing them longer pieces have been continuously ineffective. In fact the only times we read, use, and therefore learn to control more complex sentence forms are when we have complex ideas to express. Providing the occasion for complex thoughts to be communicated will be far more valuable than any other means of improving control of complex structures.

Conclusion

The larger generalizations that I would hope you would ponder as a result of this talk spring directly from theories of language which have emphasized the fact that structure is used to express meaning and that meaning-making is the driving force for mastering structures, and from a conception of language learning that shows that the most significant occasion for language development are those where language is a means rather than the end of learning. The pedagogical implications of these views, stated most simply, are that there are very limited possibilities for the direct teaching of language skills and that the long way around is often the only way to get to where we want to go.

Further, I hope I have shown that since teaching decisions are directly rooted in theory, and the problems facing English teachers have not been caused by the fact that we have too much theory and not enough practical pedagogy, but rather have arisen because we have too many Type 1 theories at the root of our teaching: We don't need fewer theories, we need better applications of the best theories we have . As teachers, curriculum leaders, and teacher educators we must all learn to adopt a Type 2 theoretical attitude toward our own teaching, we must strive to adapt and apply the best available theories to our pedagogical problems, and where appropriate we must further the development of new theories by articulating more clearly the problems we face so that solutions to them can be found. Only by doing so can we escape the looking-glass world.

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